

# **EPA's Bristol Bay Watershed Assessment and Tribal Outreach Efforts**

Pre-Briefing for May 31 – June 4, 2011 Bristol Bay Trip



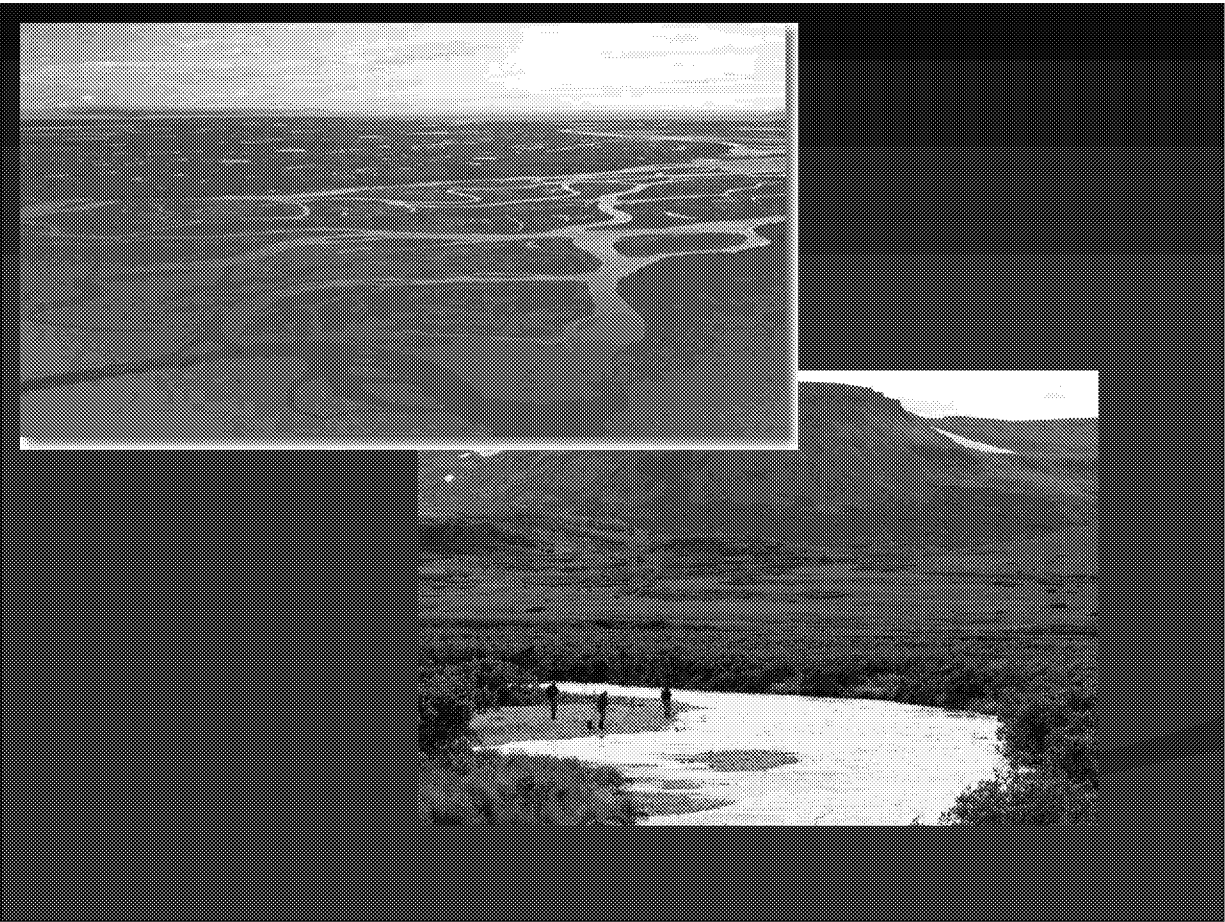
## **Watershed Assessment: How We Got Here**

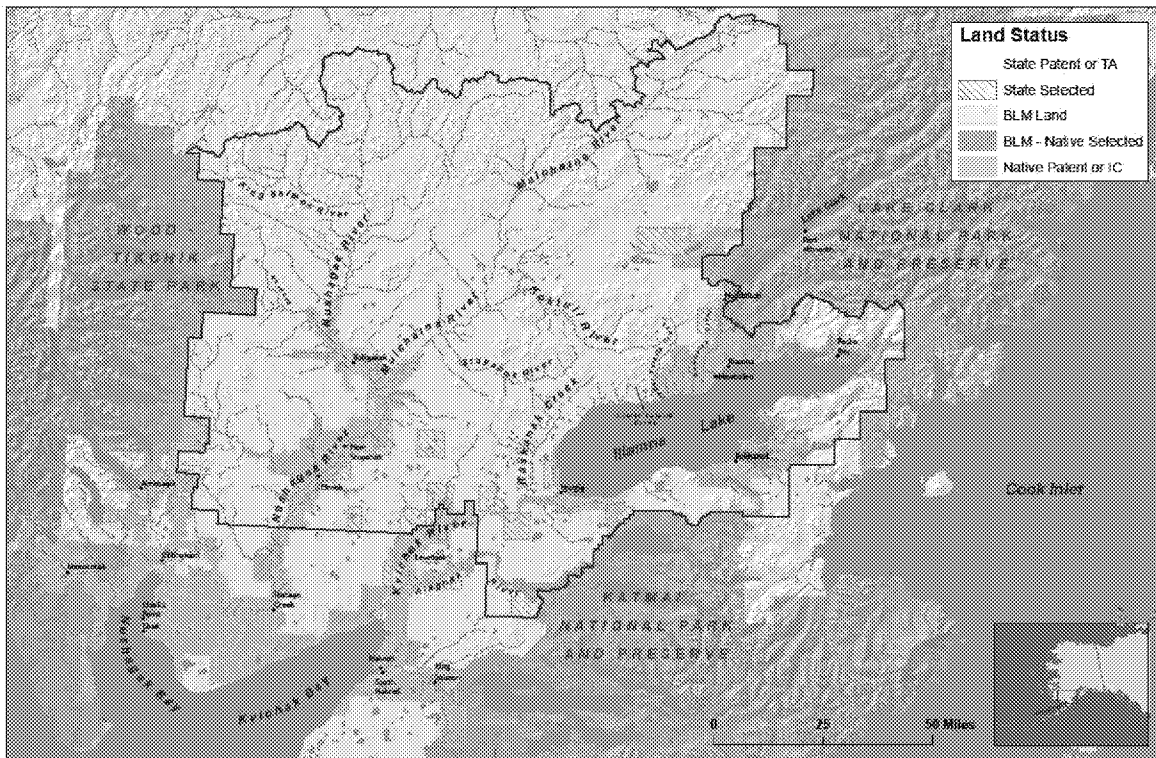
- 2010: eleven federally-recognized tribes request that EPA either take or defer action under its CWA § 404(c) authorities to either prohibit or allow the Pebble Mine to proceed.
  - Similar requests expressing a range of opinions from a variety of interests (commercial fishing, mining, sportsmen, tribal corporations, State of Alaska, general public, etc.)
- February 2011: EPA announces that it will conduct scientific assessment of the watershed

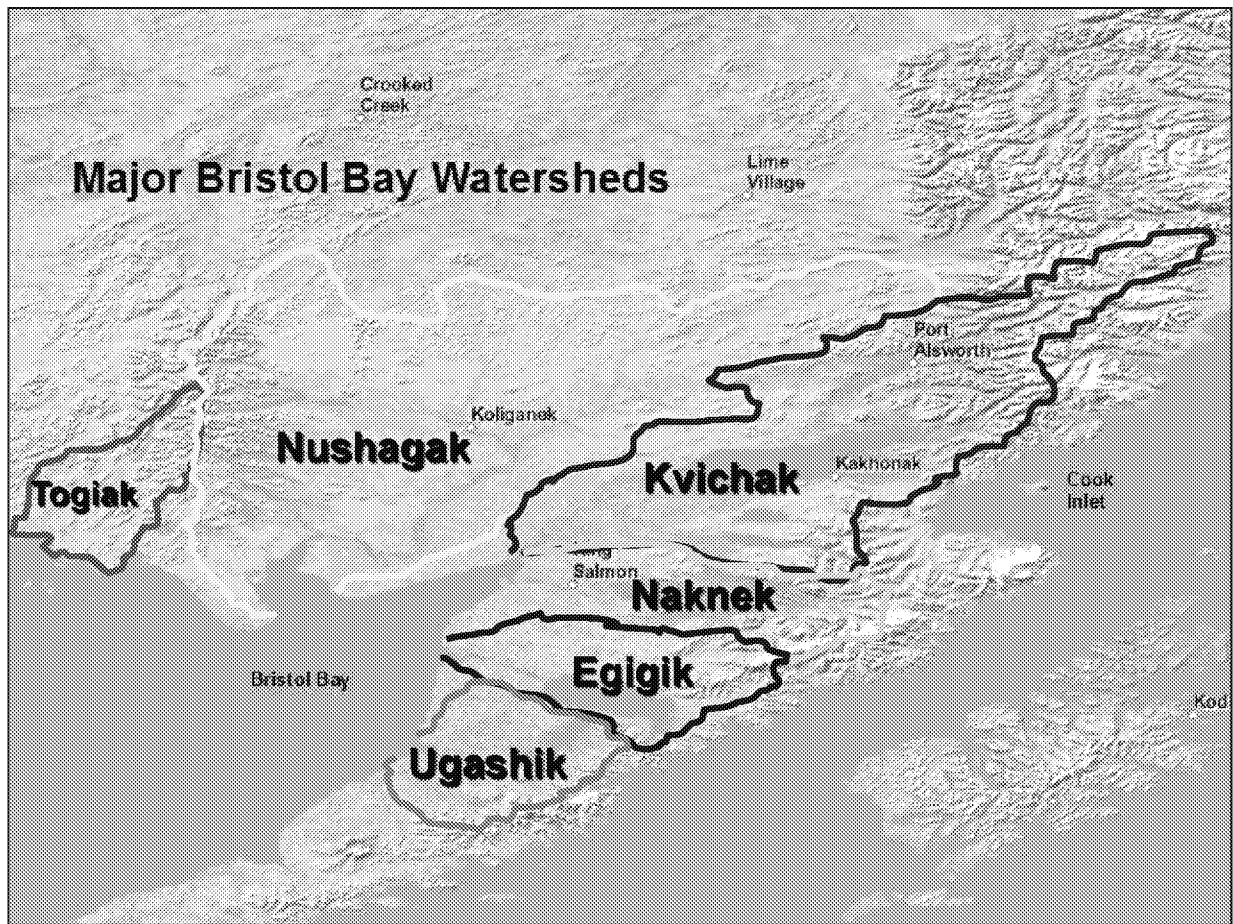


Bristol Bay is located in southwest Alaska, to the west of the state's largest population centers on Cook Inlet.

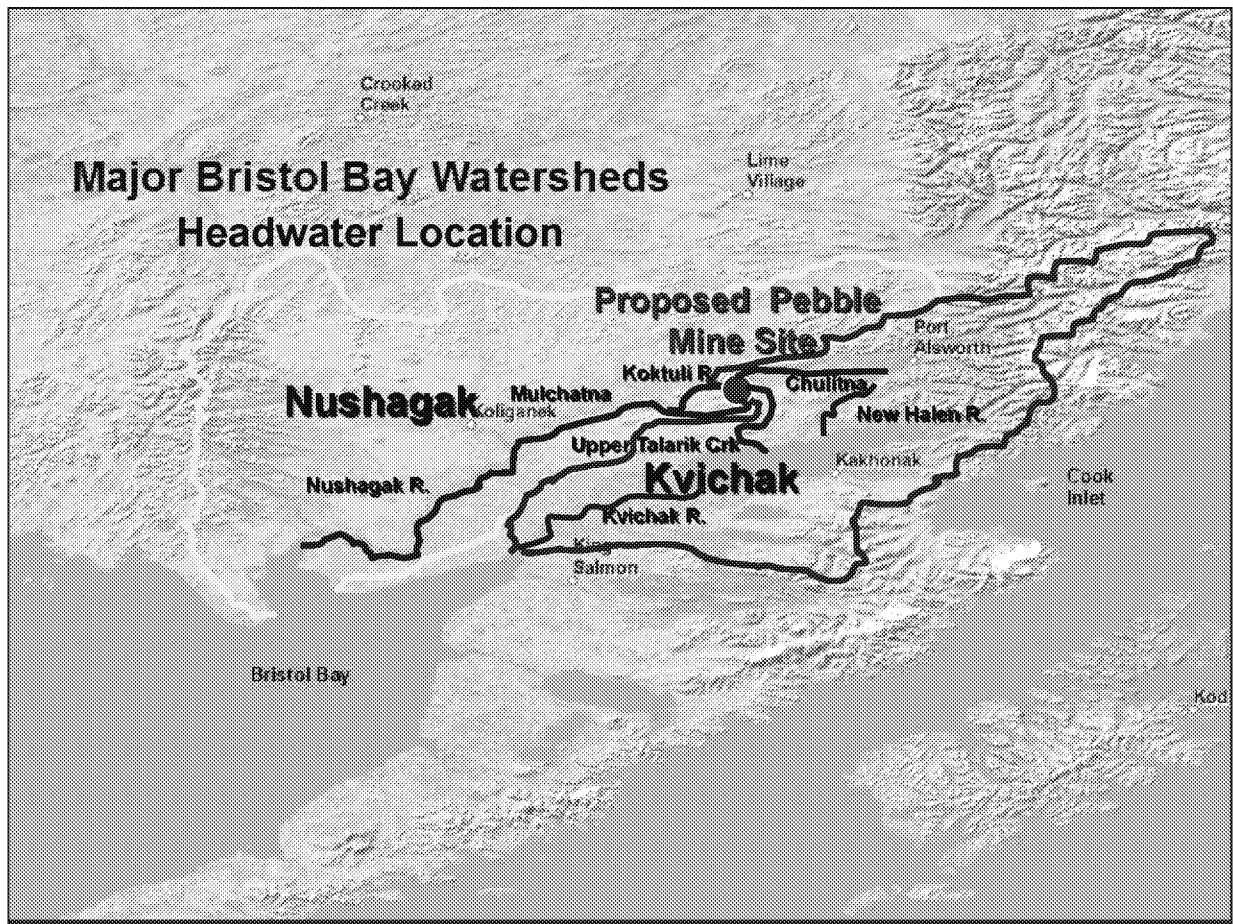








I'm guessing that the RA will take a trip to Bristol Bay, here is a basic orientation in terms of the major watersheds.



These are the two largest watersheds. They individually produce more salmon than any other watersheds in North America. And these are wild salmon. It is the only undiminished run in North America that is not hatchery enhanced. We will keep coming back to this issue of wild salmon. This slide shows the location of the proposed Pebble Mine on a divide between these two watersheds and the rivers that begin the downstream waters.



## **Watershed Assessment: Three Central Questions**

- Is the Bristol Bay salmon fishery the one of a kind, world class fishery that it is depicted to be?
- What are the existing and potential risks to Bristol Bay's salmon fishery associated with large-scale development?
- Are there technologies or practices that could mitigate these risks?

# Watershed Assessment: Nuts and Bolts

The assessment will:

- Focus on the Nushagak and Kvichak drainages
- Describe the ecological and economic significance of Bristol Bay salmon resources locally and in the North Pacific Ocean, as well as their significance to Alaska Native culture
- Compare Bristol Bay salmon resources to other major salmon resources in North America
- Describe the ecosystem characteristics in the watershed that support the fish resources and the risks of large-scale development to those characteristics
  - “Large-scale development” includes but not limited to hard rock mining
- Investigate practices that could minimize ecosystem risks and resulting risks to fish populations
- Assess the success and failure rates of these mitigation practices

## Watershed Assessment: Other Features

- Will be informed by:
  - Existing scientific and agency-produced data and information
  - Scientific peer review
  - Tribal consultation
  - Participation by other federal and state agencies
  - Public and industry input
- Will not:
  - Constitute or recommend any particular regulatory decision by EPA
- But hopefully will:
  - Inform future decisions about how to protect the watershed and promote sustainable development

## **Watershed Assessment: What's Been Accomplished Since February?**

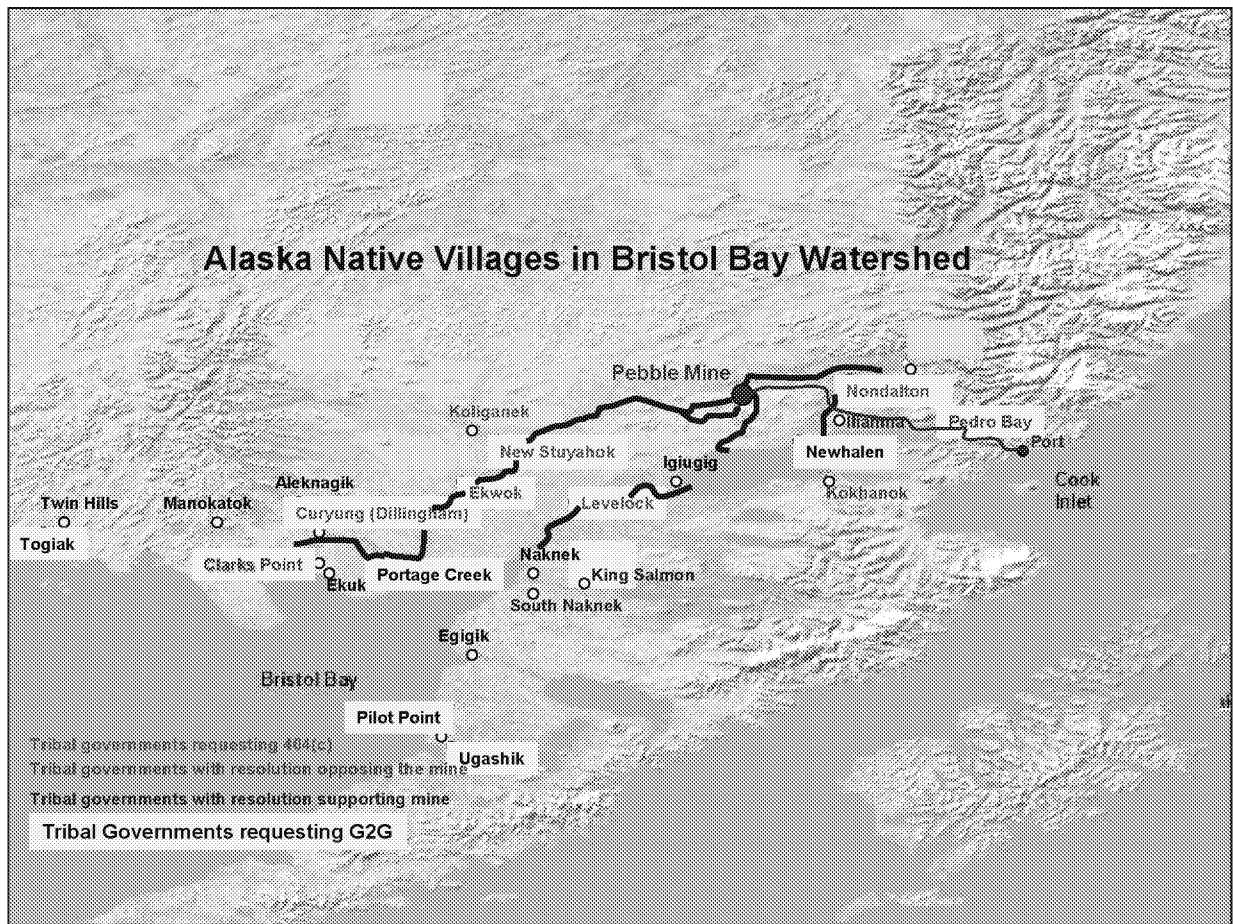
- Assembled a multidisciplinary team consisting of experts in fisheries biology, mining, geochemistry, aquatic ecology, economics, risk assessment, anthropology, community involvement, and public affairs. Team is composed of EPA staff and contractors.
- Begun gathering existing information from the scientific literature, government agency publications and experts in the various fields.
- Developing a plan to evaluate the environmental risks associated with large-scale development in the watershed.
- Invited representatives of federal and state resource agencies and tribal governments to participate on an Intergovernmental Technical Team.

# Tribal Involvement and Public Input

## Community Visits

- Iliamna
- Newhalen
- Ekwok
- Koliganek
- New Stuyahok
- Kokhanok (Lake & Pen Borough)
- Dillingham

## Public Meetings (Draft & Final Document)



The six signatories to the 404(c) letter are in red. Three more villages that have passed resolutions opposing the mine are in pink. Two villages that have passed resolution in favor of the mine are in blue. There are five villages directly on waters downstream of the mine site that have not taken an official position and another seven undeclared villages in the Bristol Bay area. All of these villages, except Port Alsworth are federally recognized tribes.

# Tribal Coordination & Consultation

- Invitation for Tribal Consultation (G2G) (March 2011)
  - Informational Teleconference Call (March 2011)
  - 12 tribal governments requested G2G thus far (March – May)
  - Currently in planning phase for G2G (May – June)
  - Several tribal governments have met with EPA (R10 & HQ)
- Alaska Native Corporations
- Intergovernmental Technical Review Team Tribal Government Representatives:
  - Curyung
  - Newhalen
  - Koliganek
  - Ekwok
  - Nondalton

